

as to be under the influence of a magnetic field, is broken up into two circular components oppositely polarised:

The system used consisted of two rectangular prisms of glass placed with their diagonal faces parallel and separated by a plate of mica of approximately $\frac{1}{4}\lambda$ retardation. The lines of force were parallel to this plate. A ray of ordinary light from a sodium flame sent into the system normal to this plate was successively totally reflected parallel to the lines of force and then at right angles to the mica, which served to change the phase and to keep the absolute direction of the circular vibrations the same. The rays passed five times around within this system, giving twenty internal reflections.

The separation of the rays agreed, so far as could be determined, with the calculations based on the assumptions usually made in explaining this phenomenon. When the field was reversed, the direction of vibration of each circular component was reversed. This does not establish the assumption of a relative change in the velocities usually made, as a relative change in the phase of the components, or both, would produce the same effect. It does show, however, that a medium in a magnetic field transmits, in the direction of the lines of force, light vibrations by circular components only. D. B. BRACE.

Physical Laboratory, University of Nebraska, August 1.

Physical Structure of Asbestos.

CAN any of your readers tell me where I can find a good account of asbestos and its *physical structure*? The ordinary works of reference I am acquainted with give too meagre an account to be of any use. GEOFFREY MARTIN.

13 Hampton Road, Bristol, August 1.

THE BRADFORD MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

IT is now possible to give a forecast of the chief subjects to be brought before the various Sections of the British Association at the forthcoming Bradford meeting. The following outlines of sectional programmes show that many matters of importance and wide scientific interest will be dealt with, so that the Bradford meeting promises to be a memorable one. No particulars as to the probable proceedings of the Physics Section have yet been received.

CHEMISTRY.

Prof. W. H. Perkin, jun., F.R.S., the President of Section B (Chemistry) is this year setting a precedent in the conduct of the sectional meetings. Several members of the Association have been asked to furnish reports on the present state of knowledge in the particular departments of chemistry with which they are especially conversant, and the reading of these reports will be followed by discussion.

In accordance with this programme, Mr. Francis H. Neville, F.R.S., will present a report dealing with the properties and interactions of the metals. The following questions will be brought forward for discussion in connection with the report:—

1. Are the methods usually employed in studying the equilibrium between two or more substances with change of temperature immediately applicable to the study of alloys, and are similar results obtained in the two cases? Thus, with varying conditions of temperature and concentration, a system of ferric chloride and water deposits (1) ice; (2) $\text{Fe}_2\text{Cl}_6 \cdot 12\text{H}_2\text{O}$; (3) $\text{Fe}_2\text{Cl}_6 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$; (4) $\text{Fe}_2\text{Cl}_6 \cdot 5\text{H}_2\text{O}$; (5) $\text{Fe}_2\text{Cl}_6 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$; (6) Fe_2Cl_6 or (7) mixtures of the phase numbered n with that numbered $(n+1)$? Are the solubility curve of ferric chloride and the freezing point curves of metallic mixtures of the same kind?

2. How far does (1) microscopic examination, and (2) change in physical properties, such as electromotive force, &c., enable us to detect the existence of a compound in an alloy?

3. In what definite proportions are metals known to combine? Is any regularity manifest with respect either to their position in the periodic system or to their valency with regard to non-metals?

4. What methods are available for determining the molecular weights of the metals, and can it be asserted in any cases, other than those of mercury, zinc and cadmium, that the molecular weight is satisfactorily determined?

5. Can a definition be given of a metallic element which makes it possible to distinguish between metals and non-metals?

6. Can any explanation be given which will satisfactorily account for (1) the difference between metallic and electrolytic conduction, and (2) the remarkable changes in the electrical conductivity of metals attending admixture?

As some of the questions bearing upon this subject are of as great importance to the physicist as to the chemist, physical members of the Association are to be invited to join in the discussion. Dr. Adolf Liebmann will contribute a report on recent improvements in the treatment of textiles, a subject which acquires peculiar importance from the fact that the 1900 Meeting of the Association is being held in the centre of a district devoted to the textile industry. Dr. Arthur Lapworth will give a report on our knowledge of the chemistry and constitution of camphor. Attention has of late years become so concentrated on the chemistry of the camphor group as to make an authoritative discussion on the constitution of camphor almost a necessity to the organic chemist. Mr. William J. Pope will present a report on our present knowledge of stereochemistry; it is understood that special attention will be given in this report to the work done during the past twelve months on the optical activity of compounds containing an asymmetric nitrogen, tin or sulphur atom. Among the other papers to be presented at the meeting is one on the specific heat of gases at temperatures above 400° , by Prof. H. B. Dixon, F.R.S.; and Mr. H. T. Brown, F.R.S., will give an account of his recent work on the diffusion of gases and liquids. The papers of special local interest include one on the treatment of Bradford sewage, by Mr. F. W. Richardson, the City analyst; and also a paper on the treatment of woolcombers' effluents, by Mr. W. Leach. The title of the sectional address to be delivered by the President is, of course, not yet announced; it is understood, however, that the address will deal with the teaching of chemistry.

GEOLOGY.

The proceedings of Section C (Geology) will open at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday, September 6, with the delivery of the address of its president, Prof. W. J. Sollas, who has chosen for his subject, "The History of the Earth in relation to a Scale of Time." Prof. Sollas will take a wide scope in discussing this subject, and will introduce such fundamental matters as the constitution of the earth, the relative value of the various geological periods, the origin of ocean basins, the formation of mountain-chains, and the evolution of the organic world. We may be sure that his discourse will be brilliant and suggestive. It is probable that Prof. J. Joly will also treat on the knotty problem of the duration of geological time at the same, or a subsequent, meeting of the Section.

As befits the place of meeting, the geology of the Carboniferous rocks will receive much attention. A joint discussion with the botanists (Section K), on the conditions which existed during the growth of the forests of the Coal Period, will be held on Monday, September 10, when Mr. A. Strahan and Mr. J. E. Marr will open the debate from the geologist's standpoint. The Coal-measures of the West Riding form the subject of a paper by Mr. W. Cash, and those of North Staffordshire of one